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Charles Miller's Sermons.





THE  
IMPORTANCE OF MATURE PREPARATORY STUDY FOR  
THE MINISTRY:

AN  
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

DELIVERED

AT THE OPENING OF THE SUMMER SESSION

OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AT

PRINCETON, NEW-JERSEY,

JULY 3, 1829.



BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

*Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the said  
Seminary.*



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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

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1829.





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*Theological Seminary, Princeton, July 10, 1829.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

*At a meeting of the Students of this Institution, held on the 7th inst., it was unanimously*

“RESOLVED,

“*That a Committee be appointed to request of Dr. Miller, for publication, a copy of his INTRODUCTORY LECTURE, delivered at the opening of the present Session.*”

*Influenced by the conviction that the subject of your Lecture, does not receive from those generally who are looking forward to the ministry, that degree of attentive consideration which it deserves ; and that the age in which we live, and the present state of the church, with a peculiar earnestness, call for those who can contend ABLY as well as earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints, and who can quickly detect and clearly expose the various errors that now appear arrayed in the most imposing garbs that extensive knowledge and cultivated intellect can furnish :—deeply impressed with this belief, the Students are anxious to have the sentiments inculcated in your Lecture widely disseminated among the youth of our church and nation.*

*With feelings of unfeigned respect,*

*We remain dear Sir,*

*Affectionately yours,*

WILLIAM C. WHITE, J. H. GILLESPIE, SAMUEL G. WINCHESTER.	}	COMMITTEE.
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*Rev. Dr. Miller.*





AN  
**INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,**

&c.

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BELOVED PUPILS,

The subject to which I have resolved to direct your attention on the present occasion, is the great importance of candidates for the holy ministry, going through a mature and adequate course of professional study, before entering on their public work. The friends of this Institution have often remarked, with surprize and regret, how very small a portion of those who study here, can be prevailed upon to remain for three years, and to complete the regular course. Seldom, if ever, I think, have we been able to persuade as many as *one half* of any class to continue their studies to the close of the prescribed period. Many stay but half the usual time; others not more than a third part; and some, after spending with us a single short summer session, have gone forth, and announced themselves to the churches as pupils of our Seminary. Against this great, and, I fear, undiminishing evil, the *Professors* have, from time to time, raised the voice of solemn remonstrance: the *Board of Directors* have, once and again, recorded their pointed testimony: and the *General Assembly* have expressed their utter disapprobation, in terms which might have been expected to be decisive in their influence on all considerate minds. Still the deplorable evil in question continues to prevail. Pres-

byteries either give it their direct countenance, or, cannot be prevailed upon to set their faces, with sufficient firmness, against it; and short sighted or infatuated young men, setting at naught the counsels of experience, and urged on, either by inconsiderate friends, or their own impatience, ascend the pulpit, and undertake to teach others, while they need to be taught themselves “the first principles of the oracles of God.”

I shall not at present, detain you with any comments on the tendency of this practice to injure the Seminary itself; to render it both less useful, and less respectable, in the eyes of an enlightened religious public. I forbear to urge this consideration, not because it is a matter of small moment; for the character of an Institution like this, is always of real importance, not only to the particular branch of the Christian Family with which it is more immediately connected, but also to the whole Church of God:—but because this is a topic, concerning which we might be suspected of partiality; and, more especially, because there are other considerations, still more momentous, on which I consider it as my duty now to enlarge.

I shall employ the present Lecture, then, in endeavouring to impress upon the minds of those whom I address, that the preliminary studies of a candidate for the holy ministry ought to be as mature and complete as he can make them; and, of consequence, that nothing less than what is commonly styled a “regular course,” either here or elsewhere, under the direction of some approved teacher or teachers, ought to be considered as sufficient, by any theological student, who wishes to be, permanently, either acceptable or useful in the sacred office. And in support of this position,—

I. My first argument shall be drawn from a consideration which I take for granted none will controvert,

viz. *That we are bound to serve Christ with the very best faculties and attainments that we possess, or can possibly acquire.*

That we are really bound to serve God with the best that we have or can gain, I hold to be, upon Christian principles, a self-evident proposition. If so, then the young man who does not honestly endeavour to make *the most* of those faculties which God has given him; who does not cultivate, and enlarge, and enrich them to the highest degree which his circumstances render *practicable*; and who, having done this, does not devote them all in the best manner that he is able, to the service of his Master, undoubtedly commits sin; and a sin proportioned to the degree in which he fails of doing in this respect, what he might and ought to have done. Has God given us talents, accompanied with the command, *Occupy till I come*? Are we commanded to make the most that we can of these talents by “trading,” that is by laborious culture and exertion? And are we informed that our reward will be in proportion to our fidelity in trading, and our guilt in proportion to our negligence and unfaithfulness? Then there can be no hesitation in pronouncing, that he to whom God has given good talents, who sits down contented with a small amount of mental culture; who, when he might gain *one hundred* degrees of knowledge, with which to serve the Church, contents himself with *fifty*, or *twenty*, or, alas! as many do, with *ten*, or, peradventure, even with *five*, commits a grievous sin against God, against the Church, and against his own soul.

That intellect is power, and that knowledge is power, will not be denied by any of those whom I now address. Power to enlighten; power to exert influence; and, consequently, power to do good. Of course, the more a minister of the Gospel has of both, provided they be

under the sanctified guidance of genuine piety, the better is he qualified to serve the Church of God ; and the more likely will he be, other things being equal, to promote its best interests. There is no doubt, indeed, that the real success of all Christian ministrations depends on the mighty power of the Spirit of God, accompanying them, and making them effectual. But still, as long as God's kingdom is a kingdom of means ; and as long as the good done, is ordinarily proportioned to the character of the agency employed in accomplishing it, we must suppose that of two ministers equally pious, he who is best instructed in the things of the kingdom of God, most at home in the great system of his truth, and most "mighty in the Scriptures," will be most likely to be a successful servant of the Church.

I would, then, appeal to the conscience of every candidate for the holy ministry, whether he can voluntarily and deliberately permit himself to form a plan for his theological education, which will, if I may be allowed the expression, stint and abridge all his preparation for public work, and deprive him, it may be, of three-fourths of that amount of qualification with which he might and ought to come forth to the service of the Church ? Can he, as a conscientious man, allow himself, when it is possible to order it otherwise, to enter the sacred office with slender acquirements, when, by doing so, he will, in all probability, render himself less acceptable to the Church ; less useful in his day ; less capable of defending the Gospel against gainsayers ; less able to instruct, and mould, and influence the rising generation ; less able to take the lead in diffusing sanctified science around him ; less able to benefit, in any respect, the kingdom of his divine Master, and the world in which he lives ? It is no valid plea to say, in answer to this reasoning, that an individual, in a given case, cannot



pursue a more adequate course of study, without much *difficulty*, and at the expense of *many sacrifices*. Be it so. The service of God daily calls for labour and sacrifice. And he who refuses to sustain them, when it is in his power, and when there is an evident call of duty, is unfaithful to the highest obligations.

II. The next argument which I would urge in favour of a mature and thorough course of preliminary study, shall be drawn from the consideration of *the extent, difficulty, and importance of the various departments of knowledge which are necessarily included in such a course*.

Multitudes of secular men, and too many who are turning their eyes to the sacred office, seem, indeed, to think that the preparatory studies of a minister may be brought within a very narrow compass. In fact, they seem to imagine that a careful perusal of the Bible; of some one systematic work on theology, such as that of *Turretine*, or *Ridgely*; and of *Mosheim* and *Milner* on Ecclesiastical History, together with a few more single volumes on detached theological subjects, is quite enough to prepare any man for the pulpit. All that can be said of such persons is, that they betray an ignorance as wonderful as it is disreputable. As well might a man dream that he was qualified to be a physician, by the perusal of *Cullen's* "First Lines," or of *Thomas's* "Practice of Physic;" or a lawyer, by reading *Blackstone's* "Commentaries." Surely such calculators never penetrated beyond the surface of any single question in Biblical or Theological inquiry. Let me request you to glance over the catalogue of studies prescribed in this Seminary, as detailed in the chapter entitled, "Of study and attainments," and then to say, whether any one of them can be wisely or safely left out of the list; and further, how much time is necessary to go over

them, I will not say deeply, but even in the most cursory manner that admits of real intelligence. When we recollect that every candidate for the ministry is called upon by our plan to make himself familiar with the Original Languages of Scripture; with Biblical History; with Biblical Antiquities; with the principles and details of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation; with Didactic and Polemic Theology, in all their diversified and interesting branches, including the Deistical controversy, the Unitarian controversy, the Pelagian and Semi-pelagian controversies, to say nothing of many other departments of this boundless subject. When we recollect that to these must be added Ecclesiastical History, Church Government, the Composition and Delivery of Sermons, the Pastoral Care, and a variety of other subjects which cannot be minutely specified;—I say, when we recollect that all these branches of study are indispensable; that they ought *all* to be made objects of attention by *every* candidate for the holy ministry; that he is really not prepared even to *begin* his work, as an interpreter of Scripture, and a professional counsellor and guide of immortal souls, without some good acquaintance with every one of them;—is it possible for any one, who knows what study and knowledge mean, to think of gaining any valuable acquaintance with these various and extensive departments of knowledge, in less than three or four years of diligent application? It is impossible. They are subjects in respect to which no talents can supersede the necessity of patient and protracted labour. Nay, it is evident that a tolerably comprehensive acquaintance with *any one* of them, cannot be acquired, by the finest mind, without months of devoted study. He, then, who thinks so far to master them *all*, as to be prepared to be “a teacher in the house of God,” at



little expense of time and toil, labours under a delusion which would be a proper subject of ridicule only, were it not so destructive in its consequences to the most precious interests of men.

If there be, then, in the bosom of the Church a melancholy spectacle, it is that of a rash, self-confident young man, who presses forward to the awful station of a spiritual teacher, when he has not been taught himself; who is not qualified, perhaps, to illustrate and guard a single point in theology; who, of course, *must* be a superficial preacher; and who cannot fail of being liable to all the crude thinking, and the doctrinal inconsistencies and aberrations, which so frequently mark the character of those who thus prematurely intrude into the sacred office. How it is, that young men apparently conscientious, can deliberately consent to go forth as public instructors in the Church of Christ; to open and apply the Scriptures; to meet and confute the learned sceptic; to silence the ingenious caviller; to solve delicate and momentous questions of casuistry; to counsel the anxious, the perplexed, the tempted, and the doubting; and adapt themselves to all the variety of characters and duties which a large congregation presents, while they are, comparatively children, both as to *knowledge* and *experience*,—is indeed wonderful, and as humiliating as it is wonderful!

What an impressive comment on the presumptuous readiness with which too many young men, in modern times, venture on the arduous and awful labours of the Gospel ministry, with the slenderest furniture, were the fears and the hesitations of the illustrious *Calvin*, as recorded by his biographers! After that celebrated Reformer had published the first edition of his “*Institutions of the Christian Religion*,” when *Joseph Scaliger* supposes him to have been the most learned man in

*Europe*, and when he was importuned, and finally constrained to settle, as a pastor in *Geneva*, he was actually on his way to *Strasburgh*, for the purpose of further pursuing his theological studies, under the impression that he had not yet obtained mature scriptural knowledge enough to warrant his undertaking the stated exercise of the pastoral office !

III. A third consideration which shows the importance of having the preparatory studies in theology as thorough and complete as possible, is, *that he who does not lay a good foundation in the beginning, will never be likely to supply the deficiency afterwards.*

Many candidates for the ministry, no doubt, content themselves with what they acknowledge to be a *short* and very *superficial* course of study at the outset, because they imagine they will have an ample opportunity of supplying all deficiencies after entering on their official work. They flatter themselves that, after they have actually entered the field of public labour, they will have at once, better facilities, and stronger excitements to study, than they now enjoy ; and that, then, they will make up, and more than make up, whatever may now be wanting. But it is easy to show that this expectation generally proves, in fact, and in most cases *must* prove, altogether delusive. Rely on it, my young friends, if you leave this Seminary with a mere smattering of theological knowledge ; with what you know to be a scanty and inadequate foundation, there is every probability that you will go through life, and to your graves, with very little more. The superstructure concerning which you anticipate so much, will, pretty certainly, be of the same miserable, scanty, and insufficient character.

For, in the first place, when a young preacher, at the present day, goes out to serve the Church,—if he have

talents, and be popular,—and especially if he have ardent piety, and a heart to perform his work with zeal, he will have so much to do; will be so incessantly called upon in every direction; will be constrained to preach so much *in season, and out of season*, that he will hardly find time enough to prepare, even in the most hasty and superficial manner, for the pulpit; much less to engage in other studies in which he might have found himself deficient when he began to preach. And, what is worthy of particular notice here, the more ardent his piety, and the more animated, interesting, and popular his preaching, the worse, as to the point in question, it will be for him:—that is, the more incessant will be his interruptions, and the more difficult he will find it to redeem any time for *real study*. I say for *real study*; for those little snatches of reading and writing, all of which, and more, are indispensably necessary for preparation for the pulpit, and which are seldom enjoyed with a perfectly composed mind, are really not worthy of the name of study. The consequence is, that nine out of ten, perhaps nineteen out of twenty, of those who engage in preaching with very slender furniture, go through the whole of their ministerial life with lean, unfurnished minds. Their “profiting does not appear to all.” Not having the *habit* of close study, it is not easy to begin. They, perhaps, hope for much, and promise much in the way of future improvement, but never find time for it. The result is, they are not instructive or interesting preachers. The small stock with which they begin is soon exhausted. Their popular acceptance soon declines or ceases. They are seldom long settled in one congregation, the people every where discovering, in a short time, that they know but little, and cannot “feed them with knowledge and with understanding.” They re-

move, ignominiously, from place to place. Instead of being attracted and edified, the people to whom they minister are scattered, and perhaps perish under their feeble ministrations. Premature dotage creeps on : and they die, in many cases, rather a burden than a blessing to the Church. It is truly melancholy to think how often this has been the real history of ministers who entered the sacred office without proper furniture, and who, for want of time or inclination afterwards, never made up their early deficiency.

We know that if a common mechanic learn his trade well in the beginning, and go forth from his apprenticeship a good workman, he is not only able to do his work *better*, but also to do *more work* in a given time, and to do it with far more *ease* and *comfort* to himself, than if he had gone out a bungler, and but half taught. The same principle, in all its extent, applies to the intellectual and moral workman. When the candidate for the sacred office allows himself to engage in the duties of that office but half prepared, all his subsequent work will be performed with more difficulty, more tardily, and probably with less usefulness. His preparations for the pulpit will cost him more time and toil, and will be less satisfactory to himself, as well as to others. Whereas, if he delay going forth to his work until he be really ready, his comfort, his reputation, and his benefit to the Church and the world, will be likely to be proportionably increased.

But, even supposing that he who enters on the duties of the holy ministry with slender furniture, should afterwards be determined, whatever it may cost him, to make up his deficiency by unwearied and extra efforts. Still his task will be difficult, and his prospect gloomy. He can only take one of two courses, either of which will probably be fatal. He may attempt, amidst all his



multiplied active labours, and distracting cares, by *night studies*, and by urging nature in every way, and beyond her strength, to gain that which he ought to have acquired before he entered the pulpit. In this case he will, pretty certainly, *destroy his health*, and either sink into a premature grave, or reduce himself, for the remainder of his days, to a state of languor and protracted disease, which will render existence a burden, and all comfortable and efficient discharge of duty impossible. O how many miserable and hopeless invalids for life, might have avoided the calamity of which they are victims, by gaining, in the preliminary part of their course, that which they unwisely left to be accomplished by subsequent efforts ! Or, the delinquent in question may choose another alternative. He may, after entering the ministry, confine himself to his study, neglecting family visitation, neglecting family instruction, neglecting the anxious inquirer, neglecting the sick and the dying, in short, neglecting all pastoral duties, excepting those of the pulpit. The consequences of adopting this alternative, may be even still more deplorable than in the former case. While the other course would, probably, be fatal to his health, this would be fatal to his usefulness, fatal to his character, fatal to the best interests of the souls committed to his charge.

But it will be asked,—Have not individuals been frequently known, who entered the office of the holy ministry with very small theological furniture ; but who afterwards, by extraordinary efforts, became not only respectably, but some of them even richly furnished for their work ? I answer, such instances have now and then occurred. But they have been generally, men of peculiar intellectual vigour and perseverance ; of great decision of character ; and placed in circumstances

which, in a great measure exempted them from the daily and hourly calls of pastoral duty. Of such a man in the American Church, within the last twenty years, since the additional claims on the time and efforts of ministers have become so numerous and importunate, I know of no example. And I have no doubt that, if the whole history of those men, who, in other times and countries, have presented such examples, were impartially examined, they would be found powerful witnesses not *against*, but *for* the doctrine which I am labouring to establish.

IV. Further; a mature and leisurely training for the Gospel ministry is highly important, *not merely for the purpose of storing the mind with knowledge, but also for the purpose of that intellectual and moral discipline, which is of no less value to a minister of Christ than theological learning.*

Many seem to imagine that the only use of a regular and complete course of preparatory study, is the *mere attainment of knowledge*. And, therefore, when a candidate for the ministry, after completing his Collegiate course, is exhorted to spend at least *three years* in a Theological Seminary, or in some similar situation, it is thought, by many serious people, to be almost a criminal sacrifice to *mere learning*. But such persons forget that the discipline of the mind, and especially of the heart, the temper, and the general character, is among the most important parts of professional preparation. They forget that even if the requisite amount of facts and principles could be crowded into the mind of a young man in six months, or even in six weeks, still one essential object of theological education would be unattained; which is *casting the whole man*, if I may be allowed the expression, *into the proper mould for a minister of religion*. This includes the correction of



bad habits ; the formation of new and better ones ; the gradual discipline and ripening of the intellectual powers ; mellowing, softening, and at the same time invigorating, the graces of the heart ; bringing down high thoughts of himself ; ascertaining his own defects and foibles ; learning the value of gravity, self-command, prudence, and Christian dignity ; studying human nature and the world ; studying CLERICAL CHARACTER as it too commonly *has been*, and as it *ought to be* ; in short, unlearning many things which have been learned amiss, and correcting many erroneous views, and juvenile propensities, which nothing but time, and suitable associations, accompanied with much observation, watchfulness, prayer and conflict can possibly, under God, enable him to accomplish. Suppose a young man to enter a Seminary like this, to be trained up for the Gospel ministry. Suppose him to have lively, vigorous talents, and unfeigned piety ; but at the same time to be rash, impetuous, indiscreet, ignorant of the world, elated with ideas of his own powers and importance, and ready on all occasions, to dash forward for the attainment of his object. Now, if such a young man had read all the books in the world, and heard and treasured up all the learned lectures that ever were delivered, within these or any other walls, he would still be unfit to go forth as a Minister of the Gospel ;—to be a Teacher, an Example, and a Guide in the Church of God. Such an one needs the friendly hints, the fraternal counsel, the gentle Christian attention of a band of fellow-students. He needs to be taught by experience, and sometimes by very painful experience ; to be admonished, and mortified, and humbled again and again, before he can be brought to “think soberly,” to feel what his own defects and foibles are, and to acknowledge that others are greater and better than

himself; before he can learn habitually to respect the feelings of others, to treat all around him with delicacy, to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." And all this is not, ordinarily, to be acquired in a year, or in two years. It is, usually, a slow process; and the longer it can be continued, within reasonable limits, the better. It will indeed be well if the close of the most protracted course in the Seminary, should find those who pass through it in any good measure, mature, or even advanced, in these attainments. For it is certain that all who enjoy the opportunity are by no means so happy. In fact, with many, this intellectual and moral discipline is far more needed, and far more important, than mere knowledge. The want of it is their most prominent and radical defect; and will be likely, perhaps, more than any other, (next to a defect in piety,) to interfere with their acceptance, their comfort, and their usefulness to the end of life.

The truth is, many of the ministers of our Church, enter on their public work by a good deal too early in life. Not only before they have taken time to become sufficiently furnished with Biblical and Theological knowledge; but before their character is properly formed and matured. Like the unfledged young of the feathered tribes, they have ventured forth, and attempted to fly, before their wings were ready to sustain them. The consequence is, that like them also, many an ignoble fall, and many a sad bruise and wound, are found to be the result. It is really very seldom that any man has such maturity and solidity of judgment, such habitual gravity and prudence, such a knowledge of himself and of the world, and such a store of the various and important information which he needs, as to qualify him for entering the pulpit before *twenty-five* or *twenty-six* years of age, and especially for undertaking a pas-

toral charge before *twenty-seven* or *twenty-eight*. Nor even *then* is he ready for such delicate, difficult and momentous work, unless he have spent years in steadily contemplating its nature, and in preparing and disciplining his whole mind and habits for its performance.

V. A further argument in favour of a regular and complete course of theological study, may be drawn *from the opinion and practice of our Fathers in all past ages.*

In the ancient Jewish Church, no priest could enter on the full and active duties of his office, until he was *thirty years old*; and of the preceding years, the last fifteen, and especially the last ten, were devoted to diligent study and preparation for his official work. Of course, I hardly need add, that the course of study in the Divinity Schools under the Old Testament dispensation, was long, leisurely, and mature.

In like manner, after the advent of the Saviour, when the Church became organized and settled, careful study as a preparation for the sacred office was continued, and that by Divine direction. For although the first preachers were illiterate fishermen, yet they were supernaturally instructed by their Master, and endowed with the power of working miracles, and speaking with tongues, in aid of their ministry; and long before this period of miracle and inspiration was ended, we find careful study and mature knowledge enjoined by an Apostle, who knew their value by experience, and inculcated them upon principles which apply to all ages. He had himself been "brought up at the feet of *Gama-liel*;" and seems to have been well skilled in every branch of literature and science then taught. And, what is particularly worthy of our notice, this only man, among all the Apostles, who was favoured with ample

and ripe learning, was by far the most eminently useful of the whole number. Accordingly he gives directions which plainly establish, not only the truth but also the importance of the doctrine for which I am contending. The candidate for the ministry, according to the direction of this Apostle—is not to be “a novice,”—but to be “apt to teach”—and “able to teach;”—he is to “give himself to reading,” and “to let his profiting appear to all.” In the second, third, and fourth centuries, study for the holy ministry seems to have been considered as a serious thing, by no means to be hurried over, or regarded as a small affair. Several years of laborious study were not thought too much to be submitted to for this important object. By some of the early councils it was solemnly decided, that no man ought to be ordained to the work of the ministry under thirty years of age; because they thought that none could be qualified for the office at an earlier period; because the Lord Jesus Christ himself began his ministry at that age; and because they considered it as the most perfect age of man.

When the modern Theological Seminaries, or rather theological courses of instruction, in the Universities of Europe were established, the same general plan was adopted. In none of them, I believe, is a less time than three years considered as sufficient for a regular course—and in some much more is required. And, what is remarkable, even in those Universities in which the Professors in the theological department, complete their whole course of Lectures in a single year, as I believe, is the case in *Holland*, and some other countries, still at least three years are considered as requisite for a complete professional course. It being supposed of essential importance that every student should travel



repeatedly over the same ground, that his knowledge might be more thoroughly digested, and more deeply impressed on his mind.

When the Seminary of the Associate Reformed Church in the United States was first established, a period of *three* years was assigned for the regular course. Yet, in a little time afterwards, the venerable Synod of that Church, extended the course to *four* years; finding, by experience, that three were altogether inadequate to the purpose intended.

Now, the use which I wish to make of these facts, and others of a similar kind, which might be detailed, is the following :—If our Fathers in all ages; if the wisest and best of men, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations, have judged that a number of years of close application to study were necessary to a suitable course of preparation for the ministry, shall *we* be arrogant enough to suppose that they were all wrong, and that we understand the subject better than they did? Is the field of knowledge *now* less extended than it was *then*? Or shall we be vain enough to imagine that we have better talents, and better capacities for acquiring knowledge than they had; and that we can accomplish as much as they did in less time? It is probable that we shall none of us think of adopting either of these suppositions. No; they had as vigorous and active minds as we possess; they were at least as diligent in study as we are; they were quite as much averse, as we are, to the waste of time; they felt as much as we probably feel, for the salvation of souls perishing around them:—and yet, after much experience, they found the time which has been mentioned necessary to *them*. Rely on it, my beloved pupils, if you had the same experience, you would be of the same mind with them: and if you have not the same convic-

tions *now*, you will, I doubt not, adopt them by and by ; perhaps some of you when it shall be *too late* to profit by the conviction.

VI. Another consideration in support of the doctrine for which I contend is, *that the present state of the world, and especially of our own country, calls for more various and profound knowledge in ministers of the Gospel, than was demanded in former times.*

It is not, I think, speaking extravagantly to say, that where *one* person in the *United States* half a century ago, received a liberal education, at least *ten*, perhaps *fifteen*, in one form or another, receive it now. In every part of our country, even in the newest and most remote settlements, there are numbers of professional and other individuals of shrewd and active minds, well informed, and qualified to judge with intelligence and correctness of the talents and learning of those who appear before them as ministers of the Gospel. Some of these men are friendly to the Religion of Christ and its preachers ; but a much larger number are, at heart, hostile to both. A minister, then, can hardly go into the most remote and unenlightened districts without meeting with some, and often with many who are able and very much disposed to scrutinize all that he delivers, and to detect all his ignorance and mistakes. A smattering, and more than a smattering in the languages, in the sciences, and in all those departments of knowledge, from which infidels are wont to draw some of their most perplexing objections, is almost everywhere diffused from *Canada* to *Mexico*, and from the Ocean to our remotest Western settlements. Now, ought ministers of religion to consider themselves as qualified to engage in the public discharge of the duties of their office, until they have gone through such a course of mature study as will qualify them to appear



with tolerable advantage before such men ; to instruct them in divine things ; to refute them ; and to defend the cause of Christ against their attacks ? Are they really prepared to be heralds of the cross ; to be “ watchmen on the walls of *Zion* ;” to be “ Shepherds of the flock ;” to be “ leaders and guides of the people ” without such furniture as I have described ? They certainly are not.

I am aware that some candidates for the holy ministry, who deliberately content themselves with small preparation for their work, are frequently heard to say, that they do not aspire to any conspicuous station ; that their utmost hope is, that they may, perhaps, be qualified to serve the Church in an humble way, among some poor and plain people, where preachers are few and greatly needed. But how can such a candidate know *where* the Lord of the harvest may assign to him his field of labour ? He is not his own master, nor will he “ mete out the bounds of his own habitation.” His duty, therefore, is not to say,—“ I will go to some “ obscure place, and will only aim to be *qualified* for “ *such* a place ;” but rather,—“ I will go wherever the “ great Head of the Church, in his infinite wisdom may “ send me, and will labour, to the extent of my opportunity and ability, to be prepared for *any place*.” Besides, this whole plea is delusive in another view. It is an utter mistake to suppose that persons of small talents, and slender furniture, are adapted to new settlements, and destitute regions. There the best talents, the best acquirements, and the most prudent, judicious men are most indispensably required. Men of feeble minds and small attainments may, perhaps, do good by sitting down in old settlements, where there is much knowledge, prudence, and piety, and where other ministers are at hand to counsel and aid them. In circum-

stances of this kind, I have known such men truly useful in the ministry. But they are by no means adapted to be sent as pioneers, into new and destitute regions, where every thing is to be commenced and organized; and where all the skill, address, learning, prudence, piety, and knowledge of the human heart, and of the wiles of Satan, that a minister can possibly bring to his aid, are greatly, nay, indispensably needed.

To this fact, the attention of the Professors of this Seminary has been drawn with a frequency and a force, which could not fail of making a deep impression on their minds. In the course of eight or ten years past, we have received many, very many applications to recommend candidates for settlement in feeble congregations and remote places, both in the New and the Old States, accompanied, at the same time, with a detail of circumstances, concerning the situation and character of the people, which convinced us that no candidates would answer the purpose excepting those who had much knowledge, prudence and piety; nay, which convinced us, that sending candidates of any other character, would rather hinder than promote the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom. Candidates we had, and, in some instances, in considerable numbers; but few or none fit to be sent to such scenes of labour; and so we were obliged to inform our importunate applicants. The truth is, many of the people in these remote districts desire—and it is a reasonable wish—that the ministers sent them should be qualified to take the lead in all the ecclesiastical organizations and proceedings, not merely of a single Church, but of several neighbouring Churches, starting into life and activity; to be the counsellors and guides of Townships, and sometimes, perhaps, of Counties; to mould a heterogeneous population into a harmonious and comfortable mass; to

give advice, go forward, and command respect in difficult and delicate cases; and to take an active part in promoting sound *literature* as well as *religion*, in the respective neighbourhoods in which they may be placed. Indeed to much of this work every itinerant missionary is called; and it is of the utmost importance that he be able to perform it with acceptance and usefulness. And that candidate for the ministry who is either too lazy, or too narrow-minded to take the requisite pains to qualify himself for these various and momentous duties, may think himself very conscientious, and may give himself great credit for being moderate and humble in his views; but he is an infatuated man. He is not merely under a mistake; he is unfaithful to himself, to the Church, and to the Master whom he professes to love.

VII. The position which I wish to establish, is still further confirmed, and its great importance illustrated by the humiliating fact, *that learning is, at present, at a low ebb among the Clergy of the Presbyterian Church.*

This assertion will, probably, be considered as a paradox by some who now hear me, especially when taken in connexion with what was before advanced respecting the growing literature and intelligence of our country. Have not Lawyers and Physicians become more learned and able, as well as more numerous, than they were forty or fifty years ago? In general I believe they have. And have not our Clergy you will ask, made a corresponding improvement? In general, I am persuaded they have *not*. Whatever may be the reasons of it, the humiliating fact, I apprehend, is really so. They have *not* made a corresponding improvement. Other causes may be assigned for this fact—if it be a fact—but I really believe one great cause is the prevailing excessive and criminal haste to be licensed, and

to get into the field of active labour. The means of more mature study, and the excitements to more mature study, have been constantly increasing; but both the means and excitements have been lost upon a large number of our candidates. And when a rapid improvement might have been expected, a real decline, if I mistake not, has been silently and insensibly going on.

A little more than three quarters of a century ago, there was a considerable number of ministers in the Presbyterian Church in this country, who deserved to be called illustrious. As to the reality of this fact, you will not hesitate, when I mention, as a specimen, the names of President *Dickinson*, the elder President *Edwards*, President *Burr*, the *Tennents*, Mr. *Blair*, President *Davies*, President *Finley*, and a number more scarcely inferior; men, most of them, at once eminent for the fervour of their piety, the activity of their zeal, the vigour of their talents, the extent of their erudition, and their commanding influence. The distinguished usefulness of these holy, apostolical men, in giving a tone to the preaching, the discipline, and the character of the Church to which they belonged, it would not be easy to estimate. They were felt to be "workmen that needed not to be ashamed," qualified "rightly to divide the word of truth;" and the Churches, and their younger brethren confided in them, and looked up to them, and, under the divine blessing, were guided aright. They were men fitted to have influence, and they *had it*, and employed it for the glory of God, and the best interests of mankind.

The generation of ministers next to them, were, as a body, little, if any less distinguished. Then we had *Strain*, and *Duffield*, and *Witherspoon*, and *M<sup>r</sup> Whorter*, and *Wuddell*, and *Wilson*, and *Rodgers*, and *Hoge*, not to mention others of equal claims; men of wisdom,



piety, prudence, dignity, and peace ;—men who commanded the veneration and confidence of the Churches ; men, who, whenever they appeared in ecclesiastical Judicatories, especially in the higher ones, seemed as if they were sent to enlighten, and guide, and bless the family of Christ.

Of the *present state* of our Church in reference to this point, it is both difficult and delicate to speak. But I ask—Have we an equally illustrious list to show at this hour, in proportion to our greatly augmented numbers and advantages ? The ministers of our Church are nearly ten times as numerous as they were sixty years ago ; and the facilities for obtaining books, and pursuing study, are also greatly multiplied. Upon every principle of proportion, we ought to be able *now* to bring forward a catalogue of Presbyterian Apostles at least ten times as large as could have been produced in the days of *Edwards, Davies, and Finley*. But can we produce such a catalogue ? It would rejoice my heart if I could think it possible. We cannot, however, I think, so far impose upon ourselves as to deem it possible. The most mortifying facts of a contradictory character stare us in the face. How difficult is it, even in this day of Theological Seminaries, some of which have been nearly twenty years in operation, to supply an important vacant congregation with a pastor, in whom the union of eminent learning, talents and piety is considered as indispensable ? How much more difficult still to find a proper head for a College, to take a goodly portion of the rising generation under his care, and train them up to sound learning, and enlightened virtue and piety ? And if a Professor in a Theological Seminary be needed, it seems he can only be had by robbing some other Institution, or some important post in the Church ; and thus, perhaps, inflicting a certain and

immediate injury more than sufficient to countervail even the anticipated advantage. I should really tremble for the interests of Christian Literature, and of sound theological knowledge in our Church, and in our country, if I did not cherish the hope that "He who sits as King upon the holy hill of *Zion*" will give an effectual impulse to the hearts of at least a few of the present generation of candidates for the sacred office, and by their means to the hearts of many others, and thus effect a happy revolution in the current of our affairs.

VIII. Let me, once more, intreat you to consider, as a further argument on this subject, that our country, and especially some part of it, *stand in need of nothing at this moment (next to the sanctifying grace of God) so much as a larger supply of truly able, pious, and well-trained ministers of the Gospel.*

There is, in my opinion, a great and grievous mistake prevailing in regard to this matter. Many youthful and unfurnished candidates for the ministry profess to be anxious to get into the field of labour, because, say they, "the harvest is so great and the labourers so few." They feel for the spiritual desolation which they witness, and of which they hear. They figure to themselves thousands "perishing for lack of vision;" and they sometimes imagine that, in circumstances so urgent, it would be almost criminal in them to remain poring over their books, while so many souls are passing daily into eternity, without any to tell them of Him "whose blood cleanseth from all sin." But this reasoning is founded on a total misapprehension. "The harvest is indeed great," and it is distressing to think that the "labourers are so few." The harvest, however, is not greater than it was in the days of our Lord's personal ministry. The whole world was *then* in a state of even more complete moral desolation than at present. And



yet He did not think proper to enter upon his public ministry until he was full "thirty years of age." The harvest is not greater, or more distressingly in need of labourers, than it was in the days of *Paul*; and yet that holy man, immediately taught of God, would receive "no novice" to the work of the ministry, would "lay hands suddenly on no man," even for the purpose of sending forth a messenger of life to the perishing. The *number* of ministers, my beloved Pupils, is unspeakably less important than their *character*. There is indeed, the most pressing want of more labourers to go forth and feed the destitute and perishing millions in every part of our revolted world. But I will venture to say, there is a still greater want of *well qualified* labourers, in whom piety, wisdom, prudence, zeal and learning are conspicuously united. *One* such man will really be likely to do more good—far more good—than fifty unqualified men, or men not furnished, in some measure, as public teachers and guides ought to be. One such man as *Brainerd*, or *Edwards*, or *Buchanan*, or *Martyn*, would be really more useful to the Church, and to their generation, than many scores of weak and ignorant men, and especially men of dubious piety, under the name of ministers. So the word of God teaches; and so we judge concerning other professions. Suppose a population of ten thousand families to be labouring under a contagious and mortal disease. Would it be better to send among them half a dozen wise and skillful Physicians, or fifty or even a hundred miserable quacks, who would be likely to kill more than they would cure? Surely no thinking man can hesitate a moment about the proper answer. The truth is; there are unqualified men enough in the ministry. Other denominations are furnishing them in abundantly sufficient numbers. The task seems to be incumbent

on *us*, under God, to train up for the service of the Church, ministers of a more mature, scriptural and elevated character ; and if the proper qualifications are not insisted on, and provided for by our Church ; if the great mass of those sent out by *us*, are not able as well as pious and faithful “ ministers of the New Testament,” I know of no denomination of Christians likely to supply the deficiency.

Look abroad, my young friends, upon this nation, in all its settlements, in the length and breadth of them. Contemplate the number, the character, and the wants of our population. Behold the melancholy reign of ignorance and vice. Contemplate the learning, the boldness, and the industry of heresy on every side. Mark well the prevalence, the unwearied diligence, and the eloquence of infidelity. Think how much able writing, as well as skilful and powerful preaching, is called for by the shrewd and hostile millions within our widely extended territory. Advert for a moment, to the mighty influence which the press is destined to exert over this people, and how deadly that influence must be, if it be not guided and sanctified by the Religion of Jesus Christ. Think of the interests of *literature* as well as of *piety*. Count the number of the youth who are to be trained up either for usefulness and heaven, or profligacy and perdition. Ponder well the necessities of our Seminaries of learning, if they are to be made a blessing and not a curse. Look at these things, beloved Candidates for the holy ministry, and consider seriously what must be the consequence, without a series of miracles, unless the young soldiers now coming forward to the service of the Church take care to be adequately girded for the mighty warfare before them ;—and if your “ spirits are not stirred within you” by the sight, to take high aims in preparing for your

work ; to aspire to elevated attainments in knowledge, and in piety, you are but ill fitted for this age, or for the office which you seek.

With these impressions, when I see young men, under the notion of serving the Church, and of supplying the urgent demand for ministers, prematurely, and without proper furniture, pressing into the pulpit, instead of rejoicing, I mourn. They may have pious intentions, and may sincerely think they are promoting the welfare of the Church ; but they are preparing, in all probability, to inflict upon it a real injury. They may think “ the Lord hath need of them.” But they are deceived. The Lord is a God of order, and not of confusion, in all his Churches. He has never made mental imbecility, ignorance, rashness, and incompetence, proper qualifications for doing his work. If “ the Lord had need of them,” he would not only open the door for their entrance, but would also qualify them for their work. In short, it cannot be too strongly impressed on the mind of the youthful candidate for the sacred office, that it is not mere additions to our *numbers*—a *larger list* of ministers of *any sort* that we need ; but more ministers of the *right stamp* ; men really fitted by the union of holy zeal, sound wisdom, and solid knowledge, to enlighten, counsel, guide, and bless the Church ; and that if they be essentially wanting in the qualifications necessary for this purpose, they had better be in any other profession than that of the holy ministry. The truth is, if we had but *half our present number of ministers*, yet, if *THAT HALF* were all men of the *PRIMITIVE, APOSTOLIC SPIRIT*, our beloved Church and country would be far more richly blessed than they are at this hour. We should soon witness scenes which have seldom greeted the eyes of Christ’s ambassadors, since the days of apostolic zeal and triumph.

The inference from all this, is, that every candidate for the holy ministry who desires to serve the Church of Christ in the most acceptable and useful manner; who wishes to be a rich and extensive blessing in his generation; who would be suitably prepared to meet the character and the demands of the age in which he lives—ought by all means, if it be possible, to go through a regular and mature course of preparatory study; that he is bound to exert himself to the utmost to attain this object; that his duty to God, to the Church, to his country, and to himself—all conspire to show the *criminality*, as well as the *folly* of resting contented with any thing short of it, if it be within his reach.

And by going through a “regular and full course of study,” I do not mean a mere *nominal* course; but a real, and faithful devotion to the prescribed studies, during the whole time assigned for them. Students may be three full years in a Seminary, and yet, by that unsteadiness of application, which is either the *original weakness*, or the unhappily *contracted habit* of so many serious young men;—by yielding to every solicitation, which wears the remotest aspect of a call of Providence, to break in upon their daily task; by accepting *agencies*, which commence a little *before*, and extend a little *beyond* the limits of their vacations; by allowing almost any plausible object, either of curiosity or of business to prevent their punctual return at the opening of each session; by forming engagements of different kinds, in the neighbourhood of the Seminary, which frequently, and perhaps statedly, interfere with some of its appointed duties; by attending anniversaries, and other religious meetings; and in ways almost too numerous to be specified, scarcely suffering a *month* or even a *week* to pass, without permitting some unnecessary inroads to be made on the time professedly devoted to study;—I



say, in these ways, they may reduce the *real* value of their *nominal three years*, to what a student of diligent habits would easily have found in *two-thirds*, or even in *one-half* of that time. Remember that a prescribed time and course of study, are merely deceptive, if they be not as diligently and constantly occupied as health will permit. God forbid, my young friends, that I should discourage your attention, even now, to any proper object connected with the eternal well-being of your fellow men. But recollect that “for every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.” Remember that you have come hither to *prepare* for the ministry, not to *commence its duties*. Remember that engagements out of the Seminary, even of a *religious nature*, may be improper for you *at present*; and that they certainly are so, if they are either unseasonable or excessive in their encroachments on your time; or if they are calculated, in any way, materially to interfere with the regular course of study, which you have voluntarily brought yourselves under solemn obligations to pursue.

Prize every moment, then, of your three years course as a precious treasure. Avoid wasting one of those moments with as much care as a miser would avoid throwing away a piece of gold. Rely upon it, you have not a moment to lose. Your whole time will be found too little for the great objects which you profess to have in view. Constantly bear in mind the *purpose* for which our venerable Church has incurred the expense of founding and supporting this Institution, and also the professed *purpose* for which you have entered it; and recollect that every engagement, either in or out of this house, which is not really subservient to the great object for which you have come hither, is something like a fraud upon your own consciences, and upon the



Church who claims your time, your talents, and your best services, as all her own.

Whatever may be the grade of your talents my young friends, or the peculiar character of your minds, respectively, the course which I recommend may be said to be equally necessary to you *all*. On the one hand, those whose powers are of the moderate and solid kind, rather than the brilliant,—and this has been the character of some of the most eminently useful men that ever lived—ought to be aware that they need all the excitement, the invigoration, and the culture which the most mature and diligent study can give them. And, on the other hand, those who are endowed with remarkably lively, vigorous, and even brilliant talents, should recollect that *they* need all that I have been recommending, on some accounts, even *more* than others. For I hold that no class of men are more likely to do harm in the sacred office, than your striking, splendid, popular preachers, who have power to excite strong feelings, but not wisdom, prudence, and knowledge enough to regulate and direct them. A ship that carries much sail, and but little lading, is always in more danger in traversing the Ocean, than the vessel which spreads less canvass to the winds, and at the same time bears an equal, or even a less cargo. An ample lading is, of course, more necessary to the safety of the former than of the latter. Let no candidate for the ministry, then, imagine that the sprightliness and force of his talents can supercede the necessity of mature study. Nay, so far from this, careful study and training are, to *him*, on that very account, the *more indispensable*. The more vigorous, powerful and active his mind, the more he needs the directing, restraining, and sanctifying influence of much study, prayer, retired communion with God, and counsel with age and experience. Without

these, he is in far more danger than the man of dull and feeble powers, of falling into the varied evils which are apt to flow from eccentricity, impetuosity, or the pride of talent.

I hope no one will so far misunderstand my main purpose in this Lecture, as to suppose that I would bind *every* theological student to pursue the course which has been recommended; or that I would refuse admission to the sacred office to all, without exception, who have not enjoyed this privilege. The contrary may be inferred from several things which I have said, but I choose to be explicit on this point. The old law maxim, *Summum jus, summa injuria*, may be applied here. To press a general principle too far, is to pervert and abuse it. Some have not *health* enough to sustain them in such a course as has been urged. Others are unavoidably shut out, by the Providence of God, from that measure of *temporal support* which is indispensable to their prosecuting such a plan of preliminary study as they themselves earnestly desire. In such cases, if there be uncommon ardour of piety, joined with uncommon judiciousness, prudence and zeal, they ought to be admitted, after a shorter and more imperfect course of study than is commonly and properly deemed regular. Still, in every such case, the privation of the opportunity of mature study ought to be regarded by the individual himself, and by all his friends—and *will* be regarded by both, if they have good sense—as a *serious disadvantage*; a disadvantage to which nothing short of *necessity* should induce him to submit; and which can scarcely fail to abridge, and, in all probability, very materially, the usefulness as well as the comfort of all his ministrations.

Besides; let it be considered, that, after doing all we can to raise the standard of Ministerial Education

and Character, there will still be some, and, indeed, a considerable number, of those whom we attempt to conform to it, who will fall far short of this standard. Just as in a *College*—with the best system of instruction, and the best teachers in the world, there will always be some indifferent and even poor scholars. But, surely, it is desirable to have as *few* of these as possible, and the system of instruction should be so framed and applied, as to lift up as many as possible to the highest grade of excellence. In like manner, too, in a field of *corn*, with the best plan of culture that ever was or can be adopted, there will be some feeble and small ears of grain. But what then? Because there always *will* be such, in spite of every thing that the best husbandman can do, would it be wise in him to lay his plan in such a manner as should be calculated to make his whole crop to consist of stunted and miserable ears? Common sense says, no. The Governors of the College will not utterly reject even the poor scholars; but try to make the best of them. Neither will the wise cultivator of the soil throw away the small and inferiour ears; but both will endeavour so to conduct the culture of their respective objects, as to have as few as may be of inferior character. Let the standard be as high as possible, and let the aim be to bring as many up to it as possible, without despising or rejecting those who cannot be raised to the desired elevation.

I have no fear that any of those whom I now address, will suspect me of a design to recommend a *cold and heartless erudition* in the Gospel ministry. On this subject, my own opinion, and that of my Colleagues, has been so often and so decisively expressed, as to preclude the possibility of misapprehension. Unfeigned PIETY—deep, ardent, active PIETY is, no doubt, the most essential qualification,—the most precious and glorious orna-

ment of the ministerial character. Though a minister had all the learning in the world, yet if he were a stranger to the converting and sanctifying grace of God, there would be no reason to expect him to prove a blessing to the Church. The men whom we wish to see trained up for the service of the Church, are men of devoted and fervent piety; enlightened and warm friends to revivals of religion; men qualified and disposed to take an active part in forwarding all the laudable Christian Institutions of the present day; and, at the same time, so solidly judicious; so intimately acquainted with the Bible, with the system of grace, with the history of the Church, and with the human heart, as will prepare them at once, with enlightened discrimination and zeal, to promote all that is good; and to discern and resist every thing of a contrary tendency, whether it appear in the form of "an angel of light," or of darkness. Such is the ecclesiastical training for which I plead. Such is the model which, next to that of the Chief Shepherd, I would hold up to your view, and commend to your sacred emulation. Let your aims be high. Not high, indeed, on the scale of secular ambition; not high to be merely, or chiefly, great scholars, to be admired as profound Divines, to shine as consummate orators, to "have the uppermost rooms at feasts," or to be "called of men, *Rabbi, Rabbi*." But let your sanctified emulation be awake and active to be able and faithful workmen; to be skilful as well as courageous "soldiers of Christ;" to be "mighty in the Scriptures;" mighty in the knowledge of "the faith once delivered to the saints;" mighty in the history of the Church; mighty in wisdom, prudence, holy love, and active zeal; in a word, mighty in that noble, comprehensive character given by the pen of inspiration to a minister of old—



“He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and  
“of faith, and much people was added to the Lord.”

What do the pages of ecclesiastical history say on this subject? What description of ministers, in all ages, have been found most eminently useful to the Church of Christ? Unquestionably those in whom eminent piety, zeal, talents and learning were remarkably united? Let the history of the Apostle *Paul*;—let the character and services of *Augustine*, of *Ambrose of Milan*, of venerable *Bede*, of *Wickliffe*, of *Huss*, of *Luther*, of *Calvin*, of *Knox*, of *Rivet*, of *Owen*, of *Baxter*, of *Doddridge*, and to mention no more, of our own *Dickinson* and *Edwards*, be pondered well; and they will convince the most sceptical, that, though men of *mere piety* may, and probably will be, the means of saving good to some souls; and though *mere talents and learning* may answer another very limited purpose; it is only the union of *both*, in an eminent degree, that can give a reasonable pledge of that deep, extensive, and permanent usefulness to the Church of God, to which every man of the right spirit will not fail to aspire.

I wish it were in my power, my young friends, to impart to *your* minds the full impression which *my own* has received of the importance of this subject. Perhaps I ought rather to say, I feel humbled that it is necessary to plead *such a cause* before *such an audience*. And nothing could ever have convinced me that such a necessity exists, but the direful and daily experience which proclaims it;—but the disheartening fact, that so many of your number manifest that you are not yet satisfied of the truth which I have been labouring to establish. How long, my beloved Pupils, shall this humiliating fact continue to stare us in the face? How long shall the concurring voice of youth and of age, of



remonstrance and of authority, continue to plead in vain on this subject? How long shall young men of talents worth cultivating, and of piety which ought to secure a conscientious regard to their cultivation, continue to cheat themselves, and cheat the Church of God, by neglecting to prepare for her service; nay by thrusting themselves into that service, while "novices," and even "babes in Christ," when they ought to be "strong men?" Whatever you may think of it now, be assured, you will, one day, find that it is no light matter. You will find that it is a subject which regards, not merely the promotion of sound theological learning, but the advancement of the vital interests of the Church of Christ: not merely the honour of our own denomination, which I hope will never be a matter of small moment in your eyes; but the spiritual prosperity of the whole family of the Redeemer on earth.

For my part, so long as I see so many candidates for the holy ministry contenting themselves with superficial and totally inadequate preparation for their exalted and arduous work; and so many actually venturing forth to that work with qualifications which fit them to be only transient meteors, and very humble ones too, rather than bright and steady luminaries in the Church of God;—I cannot suppose that the *Millennium* is very near. I believe that that time will be as much distinguished for mature ministerial preparation, as for ministerial holiness, zeal, fidelity, and activity. If you desire, then, to hasten on that glorious period; if you desire, each one of you, to contribute as much as possible towards preparing the world for its arrival; then give all diligence to imbibe the spirit, and rise to something of the elevation, which that period will assuredly put in requisition. Be not contented with any thing short of such furniture, both intellectual and moral, as will

qualify you to act a part in harmony with the high commission which you hope to receive, and to be “workers together with God” in enlightening and blessing the world.

Finally ; although I cannot anticipate, beloved Pupils, what effect this earnest appeal may produce on your minds ;—especially when it was productive of so little sensible effect on your predecessors, eight years ago ;\*—yet allow me to say, I shall not have gained my purpose, to-day, unless you let your Professors enjoy the pleasure of witnessing, from this time, a new and sacred impulse pervading your ranks. Unless we shall witness, henceforth, a unanimous determination, to think of no term of study short of three years ;—to fill up every hour of this term with diligent application ;—to attend with punctuality at the opening, and to hold out, with undeviating perseverance, to the closing hour, of every session ;—to guard with solicitous care against the loss of a single recitation or lecture ;—to cherish a hallowed greediness for every kind of theological knowledge, especially that which is *practical* and *experimental* ;—to be in no haste to solicit license to preach ;—in short, to guard with conscientious care, against the miserable delusion that “the Lord hath need” of but half qualified servants. Nay, I shall not consider myself as having addressed you with the desired effect, unless we shall have the satisfaction of finding some of your number disposed to spend not merely *three years*, but a *fourth*, and a few even a *fifth* year, within these walls, for the purpose of more profound Biblical and Theological study than seems now to be seriously thought of by any. And, let me add, that as soon as a disposition of this kind shall be manifested by any of the sons of the

\* The substance of this Lecture was delivered at the opening of the winter Session in the Seminary, Nov. 9th, 1821.

Church, I have no doubt provision will be made for its encouragement and support. We have a number of *Scholarships*, founded by the pious liberality of distinguished friends of the Seminary, and destined for the aid of those who are pursuing the regular course prescribed in the Institution. But we have, as yet, no *Fellowships*, or Funds specifically devoted to the support of students who may be desirous of pursuing a course of study considerably more extensive than that which is laid down equally for *all*, and recommended to *all*. Only, however, let a few individuals manifest such a thirst for sacred knowledge, and such a devoted and successful diligence in seeking it, as shall evidently render *Fellowships* desirable and necessary, and we shall very soon, I am confident, see one or more of them established. Be it the laudable distinction of some of you, then, my young friends, to set the first example of this high resolution. It is needed. **WE MUST HAVE IT.** How else shall we hope to see honourably and usefully filled the numerous Professoral Chairs, in the several Theological Seminaries which are rising in every part of our land? How else can we reasonably expect that our highly favoured and indebted Church will perform her part of the duty which she owes to Christendom, in promoting the culture of profound Biblical and Theological knowledge? Surely these are considerations which cannot fail of lying with weight on the minds of some whom I address. That they will rouse none of you to corresponding aims and efforts, is a supposition which I cannot possibly admit.

And may He who “has the hearts of all flesh in his hands” so enlighten and govern your minds; so preside over your studies; and so endow you with gifts and graces adapted to the day of wonders in which you live;—that you may fulfil the high expectations of the

Presbyterian Church while you are here ;—and that, wherever you go, you may each be found a centre of holy illumination, of wise counsel, and of sanctified impulse in extending the Redeemer's kingdom ; so that the blessing of the Church, and of distant generations may abundantly come upon you ! “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all !” AMEN.









